



# CHEVALIER DE LA CORNE AND THE CARROT RIVER VALLEY OF SASKATCHEWAN



By ARTHUR S. BENNETT

A TREATISE UPON A LONG NEGLECTED DISTRICT OF RICH RESOURCES WHERE AGRICULTURAL EFFORT WAS FIRST MADE IN WESTERN CANADA, IN THE YEAR 1754, AND AN ACCOUNT OF EVENTS LEADING UP TO A FIRST FARMING FETE TO BE CELEBRATED AT MELFORT, SASK., IN AUG., 1914. A GLIMPSE AT EARLY HISTORY OF A TERRITORY THAT IS THE BASE OF THE ROUTE TO THE HUDSON BAY, AND THE PRESENT OPPORTUNITIES THAT WILL SOON ENRICH THE WHOLE DOMINION

PRICE TWENTY-FIVE CENTS





A Picturesque View

Scene on an Old Homestead near Melfort.  
Few people realize that such scenes are  
common in the north-eastern portion of  
Saskatchewan.

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## AN INTRODUCTORY NOTE



**A**FTER an active residence of twelve years in Western Canada, and being constantly in touch with public affairs during practically the whole of that time, it was only a year ago that I became advised of the splendid resources of the Carrot River Valley—resources which investigation served to convince were most unusual in the prairie provinces, and which lay bare a virgin field of unique possibilities. It also interested me greatly to learn that in this region was the first agricultural attempt made in the West by the early French explorers.

It seemed almost unbelievable that such a field should remain practically unexploited for so many years, and I immediately began enquiries into the cause for such a strange apathy.

However, the general reluctance for anything like extensive venturing into mixed farming that has prevailed throughout the West, combined with the efforts of railway corporations to retard as much as possible that portion of north-eastern Saskatchewan whose development would of necessity show the most urgent need for the construction of the Hudson Bay lines, as the Hudson Bay route would seriously affect their long-haul monopoly, explained the situation in a great measure.

I have taken advantage of the opportunity afforded by the decision of Melfort to hold a "first farming" demonstration to give in these pages something of the history of the country and also a glimpse into what the future holds in store for it.

Development in the Carrot River Valley during the next few years will more than justify any words of optimism here expressed.

A. S. B.

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## CHEVALIER DE LA CORNE

## A Brief Biographical Sketch

**I**N connection with the commemorative ceremonies to be held at Melfort, Saskatchewan, in August, 1914, in honor of the initial start of agricultural enterprise in Western Canada, as early as 1754, in the Carrot River valley, a brief biographical sketch of the career of Chevalier de la Corne is here given:—

Captain Louis Luc de la Corne Saint Luc was born at Cataracoui (Kingston), on June 6, 1703. One of his first exploits was the taking of Fort Clinton in 1747. He also distinguished himself in the battle of Capillon, where he took from General Abercrombie an outfit of 150 wagons. In 1753 he started for the western posts which had been established in different places by De la Verendrye, his sons and successors, between the Great Lakes and the Rocky Mountains. On his way out he met Le Gardeur de Saint Pierre, from whom he received command of these posts. After spending some time at Le Pas, then Fort Paskoyac, he went up the Saskatchewan, where he established a fort which is still named after him—Fort à la Corne. The same year, 1753, he explored the Carrot River valley, and the following spring seeded a few acres of land, thereby deserving to be called the first agriculturist of the Canadian West. The result of his crop yielded such good returns that he was loud in spreading the news of remarkable growth in the north when he returned east.

Later he established a fort not far from Lake Cumberland, vestiges of which were found in 1772.

De la Corne, however, did not remain long in Western Canada; being a soldier above all, he returned east in 1755 and in 1758 took part in the war between England and France. He was at the battle of the Plains of Abraham; also at the battle of Ste. Foy. After Canada was ceded to England he started for France; but had to return owing to the foundering of the boat on which he was. During the War of Independence, in spite of his 66 years, he did not hesitate to take up arms at the request of the Governor-General of Canada. He was under the command of General Burgoyne for some time. After the Anglo-American war, De la Corne was made a member of the Legislative Assembly at Quebec. He died at the ripe age of 81 years.

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## A GLIMPSE AT EARLY HISTORY.

### Melfort Decides on Historical Fete

TO the mind of the writer, considerable credit is due the people of the progressive town of Melfort, Saskatchewan—so appropriately termed “The Metropolis of the Carrot River Valley”—for their enterprise and originality in determining to celebrate the anniversary of the advent of agriculture into Western Canada.

The West has been too busy all these years to bother its grain-intoxicated head about the “whēres” and “wherefores” of the initial start of the gigantic industry which has made the prairie provinces a living wealth and that causes the world to gape with wonder at the present day.

But since the first farming in the West was done about twenty-four miles from the present town of Melfort, near the Fort à la Corne Indian reservation, in 1754, Melfort is certainly the logical place to take up the matter of celebrating, in 1914, the 160th anniversary of such a notable event.

The celebration will be held, according to present plans, at a very auspicious season of the year—the first week in August, between haying and harvest—and will cover a period of three days. The feature of the event will be a mammoth pageant depicting scenes from the earliest pioneer days down to the present time. It is expected that fully 2,000 Indians will participate, dressed in native costumes and bringing with them many rare and interesting relics once owned and used by their hardy, courageous forbears. Aside from the pageant, there will be a carefully arranged general program of sports and entertainment such as western towns alone know how to provide.

The writer is also informed that both the Government of the Province of Saskatchewan and the Dominion Government will assist Melfort to a very appreciable extent in connection with the coming eventful occasion.

In this brief booklet we are mostly concerned, however, with the vista of opportunity opened up through the bare fact of the northern Saskatchewan town's decision to recognize in an emphatic

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manner the source from whence sprung the great incentive that has resulted in the blessed, bountiful heritage we are today enjoying in our broad agricultural domains.

It is significant, too, at this time, when we hear so much advocacy for the prosecution of mixed farming in the West, that the first start of agriculture in the West was in the district that is justly recognized now as the greatest mixed farming area in the West.

In this particular area there is a great awakening going on today that is bound to result in increased riches of undreamed value to the Province of Saskatchewan and to the whole of Western Canada. This awakening is not being confined to the few living in that district by any means—it is affecting the whole nation; it is affecting the United States; it is affecting Great Britain as well. Those high in financial circles in Canada could tell in a moment why this awakening did not come years ago. But we will have something further to say about this subject and this district later on.

### **Importance of the Pioneers**

It is a peculiar, yet positive, fact that the people of the West know comparatively little of the history of Western Canada, which, as far as the adventure of exploration is concerned, possesses more thrills and is of more unique interest than the exploration, development and colonization enterprise of any other section of the American continent.



**A. Typical Scene Near Melfort**

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Even the earliest pioneers who are alive today can only recall what transpired during their time, as very few direct descendants of the early adventurers remained in the West, and few "family records" were kept.

While there are isolated exceptions to this, in a meagre way, it remains for the archives to reveal the official records of the numerous early French explorers who searched for the passage to the western sea, and the records of the British explorers who followed them, and whose efforts were so effectually crowned with success.

Throughout the Western prairie provinces today we are placidly breaking up the sod, planting seed and reaping harvests upon historic ground that amazed and mystified the early explorers, and that was the scene of many a bloody conflict between the Indians and venturesome whites.

In these latter days—in the arrogance of modern achievement—we are perhaps prone to forget the full significance of the exploits of the early discoverers, and the character of the men who performed them. This brochure does not permit of any dwelling at length upon the wonderful group of transatlantic voyagers who sought the route to the western sea, and can say nothing at all of those who sought primarily a short western route to China and the Indies. Behind it all was the lure of the setting sun and the adventurous spirit of their race, but on the surface at least was the eminently practical incentive of reaching golden Cathay. They sought the treasures of the Orient, and found something of infinitely greater moment.

We shall have to confine ourselves not only to what took place when the original idea of Cathay had to be abandoned, to add a new continent to the world, but to a brief period in the history of eighteenth-century exploration in the West, and in that particular section of the West where Chevalier de la Corne and his followers constructed the crude agricultural implements that were used to perform the first tillage of the soil in the whole of Western Canada.

Briefly, then, let us draw the curtain aside.

#### An Englishman's Enterprise

Anthony Hendry, a young English officer who was outlawed for smuggling in 1748, and a year or so later entered the employ of the



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Hudson's Bay Company, is described by the most authentic records as the "first Englishman to venture inland and the first to whose gaze was revealed the waters of the mighty Saskatchewan river." Leaving the Saskatchewan to explore inland south-west by south he came upon the Carrot River. Here he paddled, with his small party, for several days, making frequent stops to examine the country around, which he described as "a region of gorgeous vegetation." This was in August, 1754.

On the 29th of the month Hendry and his party came to a French fort, built, as he found out, by Chevalier de la Corne in the previous



Explorers Making a Portage

year. "On our arrival," chronicles Hendry, "two Frenchmen came to the waterside and in a very genteel manner invited me into their home, which I readily accepted."

As Burpee says in his chronicles: "This meeting of the young English explorer from Hudson Bay with French traders near the Saskatchewan (in what is now the Melfort district) is of somewhat exceptional interest." It is the only case of which there is any record, direct or indirect, of French and English coming face to face west of the Great Lakes while the former were still in possession

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of Canada. They had met and fought, time and again, in the border country between New England and New France, and on the shores of Hudson Bay, but hitherto the French had remained in undisputed possession of the vast fur country of the north-west. It is easy to imagine, therefore, that despite all surface politeness Hendry was anything but welcome to the French traders on the Saskatchewan.

De la Corne was not present at the fort upon Hendry's first call, but later on he revisited the spot and was met by the Chevalier himself, and was invited to sup with him.

### Partakes of Native Grain Food

Hendry's surprise was unbounded when crushed cereal was served at the meal, which De la Corne informed him was the product of grain grown from a patch of land he had put in seed the spring previous. Hendry was shown the crude implements of agriculture that had been used, and was informed of the great delight of the Indians when a share of the grain was given to them in exchange for furs. Hendry wrote as follows: "It is surprising to observe what an influence the French have over the natives. I am certain he [De la Corne] hath got one thousand of the richest skins."

It is notable also in this connection to add that the later Scotch explorers found relics of De la Corne's agricultural venture. In the works of Alexander Mackenzie, that intrepid explorer speaks of finding "crude agricultural implements and remnants of wheeled carriages" in the vicinity of Fort à la Corne.

In passing, it might be well to state that the Hudson's Bay Company, in prosecuting their grasp for territory after these explorations had been made, did not find the small fort built by De la Corne in a fit state of repair for their purposes, and what remains of the present fort at this point belongs to the one built by emissaries of the Hudson's Bay Company.

### French Officer was Genteel

As around Chevalier de la Corne centres the cause of the big demonstration to be held in Melfort next year, a word or two more about that gentleman might not come amiss.

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In his short sojourn with the Frenchman Hendry describes him as "dressed very genteel." He was no doubt in the uniform of a French officer of the period—De la Corne was captain in one of the colonial regiments. In contrast to the finery of their leader, the men wore "nothing but thin drawers and striped cotton shirts ruffled at the hands and breast." This at least would tend to indicate—it being in the late Fall—that the same beautiful autumn weather existed at that early period as prevails throughout the frost-sheltered Carrot River valley at the present period.



G. B. Johnston, M.L.A.,  
Large Farmer and a Pioneer Merchant of Melfort

Hendry describes Fort à la Corne as twenty-six feet long by twelve wide and nine feet high to the ridge. It had a sloping roof, and the walls were built of log, the top covered with birch bark fastened together with willow thongs. It was divided into three rooms—one for trading, one for furs, and the third the living room.

The following morning De la Corne took Hendry into his storeroom and "there was revealed to my gaze as much floury meal as would do the Frenchman's party throughout the whole of the winter. Certainly no other man, save this resourceful officer, would ever have thought of trying to grow grain in this wild, unknown land. Of a surety, the meal is of fine flavor, and what he does not use will make him rich in skins from the Indians."

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De la Corne's record would seem to show that he thought a good deal more of the skins or furs he secured than he did of actual exploration, for the only two things he apparently accomplished, outside of trading, were the building of the fort and the very successful experiment with regard to the first attempt ever made at farming of any description in Western Canada.

### Indians Like the French

Of the birch-bark canoes used by De la Corne, Hendry says they "will carry as much as an India ship's longboat, and draw little



Cattle in Stock Yards at Melfort

water; and so light that two men can carry one for several miles with ease. They are made in the same form and slight material as the small ones, only a thin board runs along their bottom; and they can sail them before the wind, but not else." "The French," he adds, "speak several (Indian) languages to perfection; they have the advantage of us in every shape; and if they had Brazile tobacco, which they have not, would entirely cut off our trade. They have

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white tobacco made up in Roles of 12 lbs. wt. each. Chevalier de la Corne desired me to bring or send him a piece of Brazile tobacco, and a quart or pint japanned drinking mug."

While Hendry, in his records, reports the conversations he carried on with De la Corne and the other Frenchmen, he leaves in doubt the curious point as to the language in which the conversation was carried on. It was probably in French. Under ordinary circumstances an English trader from Hudson Bay would be as little likely to understand French as a French trader from Canada would be to understand English; but in this particular case it will be remembered that Hendry had begun his adventurous career as a smuggler, and must have picked up a smattering of French in his dangerous calling.

Between De la Corne, Hendry and others there are very many interesting themes, such as the Indians, buffalos, etc., that might furnish very interesting reading. However, the above will have to suffice for our present purpose.

#### A Final Peep

The last we hear from Hendry was upon his return to York Fort in 1755, where the result of all his strenuous labors came to naught with his countrymen, who discredited him as a romancer when he told of finding a band of Indians hunting the buffalo on horseback. Fortunately for history, Hendry's statement in this regard was eventually discovered to be true, but too late to do his own standing any good in life.

When Chevalier de la Corne returned to Canada and exhibited samples of the grain he had grown in the great mysterious north-west, there was a great amount of almost incredulous interest manifested by the Frenchmen, who never before dreamed of anything but valuable furs coming out of that vast unknown. This new thing was soon lost track of, however, in the stirring times that now soon came upon the country through the momentous war between France and England, and the ceding of the country out of the hands of the former nation.

We pause to wonder what the thoughts of some of these old explorers would be could they come back to life for a short space and view the prosperous and populous West in all her grandeur today, from the direct results of the cultivation of the soil, and not from fur trading, the only source of profit in those early, stirring times gone by.

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R. E. Beatty

Early Melfort District Pioneer and formerly  
of Hudson's Bay Co., always an ardent  
Hudson Bay Route advocate

### INFLUENCES RETARD PROGRESS

#### Why Country was Held Back

ON our first visit to Melfort to study local conditions and to make a thorough investigation of the 4,000 square miles of incomparably rich black loam soil with which the town is surrounded, and which comprises the real Carrot River valley, the writer was at once forced to ask: Why, in the name of all that's good, has this district not been settled up long ago?

At first we were loth to believe it, but soon the answer was forced home to us that Melfort and the greatest natural mixed farming belt in Western Canada had developed very slowly until only a very few years ago, and that this development had simply come by a process of evolution strong enough, in purely natural causes, to force its way through the influential strongholds of the two greatest corporate interests in Canada—the Canadian Pacific Railway and the Bank of Montreal.

The real object of this booklet is to tell people something they should really know about that section of Northern Saskatchewan where farming was first introduced by Chevalier de la Corne over a century and a half ago.

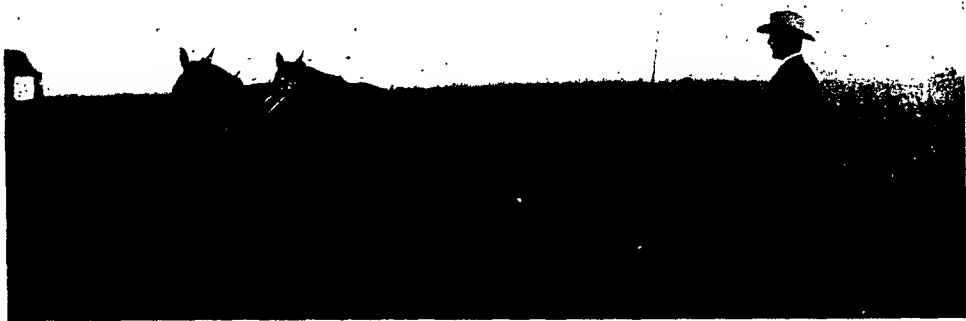
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Presently we shall endeavor to show why this section of the country demands recognition. Not only does it of its own distinctiveness demand recognition, but the progress of the Dominion of Canada as a whole has been seriously handicapped and retarded by reason of the resources of the Carrot River valley being held in leash for so many years.

Sounds like a large order, does it not? But the wonder will not be so great when we pause to realize, and are convinced sufficiently to grasp, the fact that in this section of the country has reposed, in a greater measure than the lay mind will easily conceive, the real key to the whole situation as regards the feasibility of the Hudson Bay route, and the real incentive for the early construction of the same.



Some Wheat

Just now we hear some one asking: "What have the financial corporations got to do with it? It seems absurd to say that the C.P.R. or the Bank of Montreal would knowingly hold back development in any section of the country."

Not so absurd, however, if you take the trouble to gather a pencil and paper, a map and table of freight rates about you.

Let us look at the matter from another angle.

### **Did Not Want Tide-Water Route**

The present generation is almost too old to recall how many, many years ago it was that the opening of the Hudson Bay route was first advocated in a Canadian Parliament.

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It is a matter of common historical knowledge, however, that Sir Donald Smith always raised the most strenuous opposition to such an "impossible" proposal. And Sir Donald carried some weight. He was the C.P.R. and the Bank of Montreal combined—in short, the financial king of Canada for many years.

We have not room to recite the multitudinous objections raised to the Hudson Bay route; but right here let us ask this question: Why, with the advent of steam, electricity and the many modern improvements in shipbuilding, is the Hudson Bay route not feasible,



Mixed Farming Products of Melfort District

when the traders in the north 200 years ago traversed it regularly in their comparatively cockleshell vessels?

The C.P.R. did not want the Hudson Bay route because it did not want to lose its long-haul freight charges, upon which it has amassed millions to its treasury.

Simple, is it not?

That is why the C.P.R. is opposed to the Hudson Bay route today. The other transcontinental roads are also sorry to see the Hudson Bay route rapidly becoming a certainty. They, too, fear missing a large percentage of long-haul profits.



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The longer these corporations retard the development of Northern Saskatchewan, the longer it would take the public to see the necessity for a western tide-water outlet that cuts off a thousand miles between Liverpool and the prairie.

While for years no one suspected it, and comparatively few realize it even today, the real fly in the ointment as far as the affected corporations are concerned, are those wonderfully fertile sections of Northern Saskatchewan and particularly the Carrot River valley—the natural feeding ground of the West.

Thousands upon thousand of acres of ideal mixed farming territory, than which the world does not produce a better, have been tied up for many years solely through lack of transportation facilities.

### *-Tying up Progress*

This is something the reader should earnestly consider, for there is only one conclusion to be drawn. If this district had been exploited by the railways, as other less "dangerous" districts have been, the Hudson Bay route would be in operation at the present moment, and nearly every quarter section of the Carrot River valley occupied by happy and prosperous settlers of the diversified farming class. As it stands, less than one-tenth of the land is under cultivation; this is because as yet the district is only served by one railway company. Fortunately, other railways are either under construction or finally surveyed, and with the present progress being made in the Government's line from Le Pas to Hudson Bay, they will be rushed ahead to meet the demands of enforced competition.

As has been previously stated, it has been an unprecedented instance of unassisted natural evolution that is bringing about the present metamorphosis.

### *Held Railway Charter Thirty Years.*

To show how the Canadian Pacific Railway systematically avoided the productive black loam belt of the north, it is interesting to note that the company now has a charter for a line through the district, through Melfort and beyond, which it has held, but refused to build upon, for over thirty years. In fact, the original survey for the main line of the C.P.R. went close to the present town of Melfort, the stakes of which are to be seen at the present day.

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What a tremendous argument this in favor of Government-owned facilities.

Here is a country persistently ignored, because of its proximity to the Hudson Bay route, and yet the richest mixed farming country in the whole West. In the Carrot River valley alone there is this year going to waste enough feed to pasture and winter every hoof of cattle, sheep and hogs in the whole Dominion—and have lots to spare at that.



A Current in the Carrot River

### The C.N.R. Steps In

When the Canadian Northern Railway was practically forced to build its line from Prince Albert to Hudson Bay Junction a few years ago, the line, of necessity, passed through the town of Melfort and a goodly portion of the rich black loam belt. Canadian Northern officials saw that the Hudson Bay route could not be held back much longer, no matter how strong the influence brought to bear. They

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then got in on the ground floor and secured charters from Saskatoon to Melfort, from Melfort to Le Pas and from Humboldt to Melfort. The latter line is now built out 25 miles from Melfort, and construction will start next year (in 1914) on the line from Melfort to Le Pas. This road will naturally be rushed ahead with all speed, as the Government has declared that 1914 will see the completion of its Hudson Bay line from Le Pas to Port Nelson. The Saskatoon-Melfort line is also under construction north from Vonda. The construction of these latter two roads means that the C.N.R. has long had in view a long direct line to the Bay. It means an extension of the Goose Lake line that will give the company a direct line from Calgary to Le Pas; and this, of course, will eventually mean from tide-water on the Pacific to tide-water on the Hudson Bay.



R. G. Wood, of Melfort  
Early Settler Who Made Good in  
the Black Loam Belt

### Will be Forced to Build

Now that its game has been played to the limit, the Canadian Pacific will, within the next two years, construct its Hudson Bay-ward lines through the north-eastern section of Saskatchewan. The Grand Trunk Pacific will of necessity follow suit, and as all the natural advantages, in addition to it being the natural route, lead through the Carrot River valley, that portion of the country, which



J. R. Long, J.P.  
Secretary Melfort Canadian Club

is notable for its being the first to receive farming experimentation in the West, and whose wonderful resources have been so shamefully neglected, will at last come into its own as one of the brightest agricultural luminaries of this century, which is Canada's very own; and it will be one of the biggest profit producers in the whole Dominion besides.



**A Group of Pioneers**

(2) C. O. Clemens, 24 Years in District

(1) J. W. Campbell, a Settler Since 1877

(3) Councillor W. W. Mansell,  
Pioneer Melfort Furniture Man and a Black Loam Convert for 22 years

(5) Peter Aikenhead, 24 Years in District

(4) J. B. Cazes, 26 Years in District

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Government Creamery at Melfort

### A PROMISING DISTRICT

#### Soil of Great Richness

**A**S the nature of the soil, plus climatic conditions, permits of the raising of anything from No. 1 hard winter wheat to cucumbers and cantaloupes, and as there is an abundance of timber—125 million feet having been taken out each year for the past five years, according to E. Hawke, chief provincial timber inspector for Northern Saskatchewan—the settlers in the black loam district surrounding Melfort never found much difficulty in the early pioneer days of solving the problem of a livelihood, even though there was no means of transporting their produce. They could live on the fat of the land, where a settler similarly situated in the bald prairie regions would simply starve to death.

Hence we find there were a number of white settlers in the Carrot River valley long before the railways ever showed the slightest inclination to tap it with girders of steel.

This was a condition decidedly unique, that settlers could live without market transportation, and this was the reason that the

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process of evolution attracted attention to the rich district in spite of the boycotting campaign of the "long-haul corporations."

### Modern Pioneers

Reginald Beatty, today a prominent resident of Melfort, was one of the first to take up a homestead, in 1884, after severing his connection with the Hudson Bay Company. Mr. Beatty understood the country thoroughly, and he quickly grasped the conditions that were holding the northern country back. When the C.N.R. started operations in the West, he left no stone unturned to persuade



James Cameron  
Prominent Farmer and Melfort Pioneer,  
21 Years in the District

the Company of the necessity of the present road through Melfort. Men like John Ellis, Thomas Sanderson and James Robertson, all now prosperous residents in Kinistino, and who were all settled on farms since 1879, became imbued with the Beatty spirit, and to such pioneers are due the considerable advancements the country made. Mr. Robertson brought the first stock to the valley, and the district has since proved itself without an equal in the West for stock-raising purposes. There is feed unbounded, in addition to those other great essentials, plenty of water and shelter. At the present time sheep are being shipped from the southern portions of the province to the Melfort district to be fattened, and then shipped on to the market.

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Needless to say, these early pioneers had a hard life to lead despite the fact that they could grow all their foodstuffs and trap much of their clothing. The nearest town was Fort Qu'Appelle, and it was no midsummer night's dream making the journey to that post with oxen and the old Red River carts. It was no joke, either, for this handful of settlers to fight with the authorities at Ottawa for recognition as human beings deserving some consideration in the way of roads and bridges.

All survived, however, and every one of these old-timers who are living in the district to-day are in splendid condition both



Breaking Black Loam Soil

financially and physically. A few of these who settled in the early 80's are James Tennant, Chas. Lowrie, James McPherson, Samuel and John Jackson, James Clark, Thomas Irvine, *et al.* Many others gradually drifted in in the years that followed, and none who came and saw the land turned away and left it.

### Supplied Cattle to Soldiers of '85

It is interesting to learn that at the time of the Riel rebellion of 1885, General Middleton's troops were fed with cattle raised by the settlers in the Melfort district. The settlers lived mainly from their

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stocks and flocks until 1892, as it was not until then that land was broken to start grain growing in earnest, and it was not until that year that what is now the thriving town of Melfort began to assume the aspect of a small village.

There is a mass of interesting data concerning early days in the Carrot River valley, and the development of Melfort and the several neighboring small towns, that would make quite a readable story but in this brief work there is no space to deal with the subject. Suffice it to say that, even although strong influences were at work to retard development, there is no other section of the country developed



Sheep Raising Easy and Profitable

upon such a substantial basis. While growth has been slow, it is of the most permanent character. The development that took place was done to last, and the worth of the land has long ago been fully demonstrated, so that the newcomer who understands anything about farming at all can see at a glance almost just the sort of proposition he has to tackle.

While other districts throughout the West are clamoring for experimentation that will tend to cause the land to produce more abundantly, the Carrot River valley seeks for scientific treatment that will tend to control and concentrate a growth that is of exceeding rankness.



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### Strength of Growth

The peculiar nature of the black loam soil is such that, unlike other districts, there is no slump in the yields from successive cropping. A case in point was shown the writer on the farm of James Cameron, about a mile east of Melfort. The 1913 crop was the twenty-first successive season the land has been planted. There has never been a failure, and this year the farm is to yield 35 bushels of wheat to the acre. At Kinistino, also, Chas. Lowrie has reaped a good crop



The Porkers Thrive in Luxury

from one field every year for the past 27 years. Over 1,200,000 bushels of grain were shipped from the Melfort elevators alone of the 1912. On the farm of G. B. Johnston, M.L.A., oats last year averaged 100 bushels to the acre for the section he had in crop.

### Essentially Mixed Farming Paradise

But it is not our purpose to dwell upon the grain crops here produced. The district is essentially adapted for intensive farming,

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and it is in this industry the Carrot River valley is to become rich and famous, just as soon as the Hudson Bay route is a going concern. Then the eyes of the settler and investor alike will be attracted to that section of Saskatchewan by the sheer force of unrestrained opportunity that really exists at this moment, but which is not being recognized on the scale that it should be for various reasons. The chief reason is that mixed farming in the West is as yet in its infancy, and it is only the past year or two that the matter has been given any serious consideration. As for the complacency of the older



Carrot River Valley Indians in Native Costume

farmers of the community, we will quote an extract from a recent article appearing in the Melfort "Moon": "It is no idle boast to speak of the black loam belt as the mixed farmer's paradise. The fact speedily becomes self evident to those who know anything about the business. The reason the Melfort district is not universally hailed as a mixed farming district superior to any other in the West is not the fault of the newcomers. It is the fault of those of our old settlers who are content to bank upon the grain crop alone. The simple fact that the grain crop has never been a total failure in this district—as it has at one time or another in nearly every other district in the province—is perhaps the best reason that mixed farming is not

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further advanced, and is not in a respectable measure the enormously profitable industry it will shortly become. In speaking along these lines we have not only reference to the district immediately surrounding Melfort, but to the famous Carrot River valley generally—where farming was first introduced into Western Canada 159 years ago by Chevalier de la Corne, the French explorer.”

### *American Settlers Coming*

It should be said, however, that more progress has been made in this district with diversified farming during the past two years than in any other section of the western country. And this year (1913) many American settlers have arrived from Oklahoma, Kansas, Iowa, Nebraska and Missouri to engage exclusively in this pursuit. All of these are advising friends to follow in their wake—to come over and participate in the sure crops off \$25 land that they fail to get off \$250 land at home.

Those who visited the stampede at Winnipeg, and passed through the corridors of the Industrial Bureau, would have an opportunity of seeing some wonderful specimens of growth from the Melfort district—brome grass seven feet tall, pea vine stretching out over twelve feet, great cereal stalks, and vegetables, flowers and currants of various descriptions. No growth anywhere could be more prolific. From the first bursting of the springtime sun in the month of April till long after the August harvest there is a wealth of growth runs



Side Station Saw-mills Numerous

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riot throughout this immense black loam territory that it is simply impossible to excel. Cattle, hogs and sheep are in a veritable paradise with the best of such a superabundance of feed, water and shelter.

### A Wealth of Land

In a few years land will be considerably increased in value and fortunes will continue to be made in a section of the country that has more wealthy farmers even now than any other section of the West.

However, this territory contains more arable black loam land than the whole of the arable section of the Peace River country, and there is room for thousands of new settlers of a desirable class. This booklet, we would remind any sceptical reader, is not an advertisement. The writer has nothing to sell. It is intended as a protest against the manner in which the people have been defrauded of their rights by one of the richest and most desirable spots in Canada being boycotted and side-tracked because one or two wealthy corporations possessed enough influence to hold back the construction of the Hudson Bay route—the greatest boon that could come to the Canadian West. All wealth comes from the soil, and surely the soil cannot be the recipient of too much consideration at our hands.

Since Melfort has decided to do honor to the West's first farming, in a pageant and celebration next year, the writer has simply taken advantage of the occasion to throw, however feebly, a great agricultural tract into the limelight that affords such splendid opportunities and possibilities for a class of settlers who can grasp the idea that the great crying need of the West at the present time is for mixed farmers, and who can realize that no other spot on the continent is so easily accessible, or offers such munificent chances for reward as the Carrot River valley is offering at this moment. The Hudson Bay road is being built with some 1,500 men now working out of Le Pas, and the dawn of that long-looked-for era of Northern Saskatchewan expansion and development is now breaking before our very eyes. The leash is being loosed, and the restraining power of the corporate interests is giving way before the gigantic force of an evolutionary movement that has at last gained sufficient momentum to command the respectful attention of the most powerful factors in the land. The story of the Carrot River valley will continue to accumulate, and each chapter will continue to be more significant of the golden future now spreading wide her arms.

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## *Carrot River Valley and the Town of Melfort*

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Dr. T. C. Spence  
Mayor of Town of Melfort, and one of the Pioneers  
of the District

### THE TOWN OF MELFORT

#### A Model of the West

THE reader will have gathered from the foregoing that the town of Melfort and the Carrot River valley are closely allied one with the other—synonymous, as it were. The growth of the town has been the growth of the district—steady, solid, permanent. Like the district, the town also is just now on the threshold of its real growth and development. From a hamlet in 1903 the town has, ten years later, a population upwards of 1,500.

Owning and operating its own telephone system, with the most complete waterworks, sewer and electric light plants, with three fine hotels, three banks, two newspapers and many substantial business blocks—the Smart block, a brick and stone structure, now being completed at a cost of \$50,000—Melfort is a model of modern solidity and stability among the most promising towns of the West.

The town is equipped with a splendid \$50,000 school, new \$60,000 Post Office and Armory building, a neat commodious hospital; with many beautiful brick residences and gardens, and several

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churches. Here is located one of the Government-controlled creameries that are doing such a fine practical work for the promotion of mixed farming throughout the province. Last year the production from the Melfort creamery was second in the province, with over 240,000 pounds of butter—and last year was only the third year of the creamery's existence.

As the Melfort district is shortly to become the stock farm of Canada, an agitation is now on foot to have a large Government-controlled abattoir erected at that point, which will be the first divisional point out of Saskatoon on the Hudson Bay road.

### *A Railway and Distributing Centre*

Melfort is centrally situated in the valley and, by reason of its splendid geographical location, will be the objective for all railways building through to the north and north-east territory. The town



Melfort's New \$60,000 Post Office and Armory

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## *Carrot River Valley and the Town of Melfort*

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cannot hope to get away from being an important railway centre. It is expected that a roundhouse will be erected by the C.N.R. this Fall.

Melfort will be the distributing centre for a very large area of country. Few people have any real conception of the extent of the business impetus that will result from the railway opening up the valuable lands that lie to the north of this town. What from the wealth produced from stockraising, grain-farming, produce and dairy products, and the lumber industry, there are immense possibilities that not one person in a hundred stops to figure up a rough estimate of.



A Bird's Eye View of Melfort

The stranger cannot be expected to know unless some such information as we are endeavoring to give in a brief crude way is placed before him; and the residents themselves have seen the country held back so long by the powers that be, they seldom are inclined to reason beyond the fact that they are all pretty comfortably "fixed" the way things are at present. It remains, then, for the newcomer to figure out the unlimited possibilities the opening of the Hudson Bay route holds in store for Melfort and north-eastern Saskatchewan. This road would be a splendid thing for any of the ordinary prairie towns to be a divisional point on, but a town with such diversified resources as Melfort is surely in luck indeed.

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## *Carrot River Valley and the Town of Melfort*

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**Sidney Smart**

One of Melfort's Largest Property Owners  
and Builder of Smart Block

Besides reserving a large public park, race track and exhibition grounds, Melfort Board of Trade has also had the foresight to arrange for a reservation of industrial sites close to the tracks. We do not know that inducements have been made to any manufacturing concerns to locate in the town up to the present time; but we do know that several plants will shortly find this an admirable point within the next couple of years, with the advent of the new tide-water route.

A prominent Winnipeg capitalist, who is also a recognized authority on Western conditions, aptly refers to Melfort as "The Edmonton of Saskatchewan."



**Power House, Melfort**





(2) Capt. F. B. Goodwillie, Barrister, Melfort

(1) E. Hawke, Melfort, Chief Timber Inspector Northern Saskatchewan

(3) G. B. Jameson,  
Melfort's Deputy Mayor and Pioneer Hardware Merchant

(5) O. D. Hill, Barrister, Melfort

(4) H. G. Dawson, Head of the Dawson-McEwen Hardware Co.,  
and Elevator Owner

## *Carrot River Valley and the Town of Melfort*

### SOME INTERESTING SUBJECTS

#### Splendid Hunting Grounds

**P**ROBABLY in no other section of the Province of Saskatchewan will the sportsman find a more ideal spot for the gratification of his nimrodic tastes than in the district surrounding Melfort. While a number of small lakes are alive with fish, the country is simply swarmed every Fall by ducks that may almost be knocked with clubs, and grouse and chicken of all kinds are found in great abundance. Plenty of deer and moose are to be found in the northern section and winter trapping is still engaged in at a profit.



A Side Street in Melfort

#### Chiefly Anglo-Saxon Settlers

The settlers in the Carrot River valley district are chiefly Canadians and Americans, with a generous sprinkling from Great Britain. There is a French settlement at Lake Lenore, twenty miles south of Melfort, and there are also three or four small Scandinavian settlements scattered about, composed of the better classes of these people.

#### Excellent Social Conditions

In the town of Melfort, and throughout the surrounding district, a splendid social spirit maintains. With all the educational and

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religious advantages of the larger centres, the people themselves are of a class who get all the best there is out of life, and who intermingle with the freedom of perfect companionship and enliven all occasions for mutual benefit.

A large skating-rink at Melfort affords a fund of pleasure in hockey and curling for winter pastime. All other sports are indulged in with enthusiasm, and newcomers all find a hearty welcome in congenial environment.

### *The Hudson Bay Route*

Speaking of this route, we wish right here to correct a wrong impression that the Hudson Bay is only navigable four or five months in the year. This route was travelled 200 years ago in the dead of winter. The Hudson Bay never freezes up, and the effect of the tides keeps the ice broken in the harbors. This is only one of the many canards given out by the "interests" to give this important undertaking a black eye.

### *Fine Telephone Inter-communication*

A very important feature in connection with the progress now going forward is the fact that five new rural telephone companies have been organized in the districts surrounding Melfort. Each one of these companies will construct a complete system and all will have direct connection with Melfort. This, in addition to the local and Government lines, will give the district a comprehensive service enjoyed by few other districts in the West.

The value of such splendid telephonic communication appeals particularly to settlers from Eastern Canada and from the United States. To most of these the telephone has long since ceased to be a luxury, and they are very favorably impressed to find such adequate service in such a comparatively new country.

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### WONDERFUL RESOURCES

#### Opportunities for Settlers

**B**ESIDES the lands already settled upon, and those open for settlement at prices ranging from \$10 to \$50 per acre, in this ultra-productive section of Saskatchewan, there is still considerable homestead land left. The major portion of this homestead land is comparatively close to some store and post office, but little of it is now to be found less than about twenty-five miles from Melfort. As homestead land, however, the writer cannot conceive of a more desirable locality in the West for winning that \$10 bet from the



Feathered Assortment on Black Loam Farm

Government. Certainly, none of the more disagreeable hardships to be found on the open prairie wheat stretches are encountered in the Carrot River valley. In the open prairie considerably more capital is required to embark in the homestead enterprise, and it can soon be ascertained to the satisfaction of any bright, thinking settler that once his duties are completed, his 160 acres of ideal mixed farming land will be a far superior asset to 160 acres that is useful only for the cultivation of coarse grains.

Besides the advantages of an abundance of free fuel, and all the feed, water and shelter that could be desired, the homesteader there

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will find that only a few hours' work will enable him to raise all the vegetables he could use during the winter months. Wild berries are plentiful and make excellent preserves. If he goes in for hog and poultry raising on a sensible scale he will probably be nearer independence when his three years are up than he would be after three additional years on an open prairie farm.

### Prosperous Inhabitants

One is at once struck with the evidences of prosperity that are exhibited on every hand throughout the length and breadth of the Carrot River valley, and particularly in the territory immediately



Melfort's First School, Ten Years Ago  
To-day a \$50,000 Structure Looks After Education

contiguous to the town of Melfort. The inhabitants could none of them be termed "poor," and nearly every single one of them who have been in the district for five years or more are literally on "Easy Street."

Melfort itself is one of the most prosperous towns in the province, with her first business failure yet to be recorded. The great development stimulus that will come with the opening of the Hudson Bay route will naturally set the prices of both farm lands and town property considerably ahead of their present quotations—these being really held at a very low figure at the present time considering the prospects in view for the impetus that is inevitable. Nothing

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that man can do will keep the Melfort district longer in the background once the transportation facilities now building demand the enormous tonnage in stock, grain and produce it is so abundantly capable of supplying.

### **An Inspiring Growth**

The position that the town of Melfort occupies in the present period of western development is a unique and enviable one. With its select location, and with the great variety of resources contributed



**A Convincing Proof—Scene Near Melfort**

by the surrounding rich areas, there is not the remotest possibility of a slump or set-back. It will continue in the substantial growth already attained, only in a greatly accelerated degree. These community resources are just what the West needs—they are just what the bankers and the economic experts are to-day telling us the West must have to maintain true, permanent prosperity. The Government of the province is strongly advocating intensive farming, and is offering assistance to the husbandman who will engage in it. The West has

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been wheat crazy for long enough and the time has come when those districts in any wise adapted for the industry must turn their attention to mixed farming. An experimental farm will shortly be established at Melfort by the Dominion Government, and this, with all conditions of the most favorable character to draw upon, will soon result in a tremendous stimulation of the latent resources.



Harvesting Near Melfort

Add to this the effect the opening up of the Hudson Bay route will bring to bear, and several banks will have to arrange for a greatly increased volume of business.

### *Melfort's Auspicious Step*

Let us add that Melfort has taken a very auspicious and progressive step in connection with the De la Corne pageant to be held next August. Never before in the history of the West could such a celebration come with greater effect or significance than at this time, when all wise students of national prosperity are alive to the necessity for a radical new era in connection with the agricultural, and therefore the commercial, advancement of Western Canada.

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*Carrot River Valley and the Town of Melfort*

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Residence of Wm. Sparrow—One of the Many Fine

If this booklet has given some idea of the possibilities for settlement in the greatest of the mixed farming districts of the West, and has somewhat clearly shown the real reasons why such a valuable heritage has been kept in the background for so many years, it will have accomplished its mission. ♦